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AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

— OF —

HOME MISSIONARY WORK

IN VERMONT,

— BY —

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES.

BY REV. C. S. SMITH.

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AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

Of Home Missionary Work in Vermont by the Congregational Churches.

READ AT THE SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VERMONT DOMESTIC
MISSIONARY SOCIETY, HELD AT MONTPELIER, JUNE 14, 1893.

By Rev. C. S. Smith.

Any attempt to sketch the home missionary work of Vermont should begin at the beginning, and not at some subsequent period, for it has been a continuous work from its first inception. It was commenced as early as 1798, possibly a year or two earlier, by Congregational ministers, who came from Massachusetts and Connecticut on horse-back, and spent a few weeks in the summer and autumn in preaching the gospel in destitute communities. Those who came first were settled pastors. They were led to come to the Vermont wilderness from the fact that some of their former parishioners had strayed to this northern region, and reports had reached them of the spiritual destitution that existed in this new State. They came to spend their summer vacation in missionary work among the new settlers.

In 1798 the Connecticut Home Missionary Society was organized. It immediately commenced sending missionaries to Vermont, and during the following five or six years, commissioned thirty-nine ministers to go to Vermont and look after the shepherdless sheep in the wilderness. A few also came from Massachusetts, the Home Missionary Society there being formed a year later than the one in Connecticut. One of the men who was sent from Massachusetts was Rev. Adoniram Judson.

The work done by these men was to go from town to town, spending one or more Sabbaths in any community where their services were needed. They preached on week-days as well as on Sunday's, when a congregation could be gathered in a church, school-house or private dwelling. They visited schools, administered the sacraments, admitted members to the Churches, called on the sick and officiated at funerals when occasion required. These men were looked up to with great respect, and their spiritual services were highly appreciated. They sowed the seed of the kingdom broadcast. The feeble churches were encouraged by their presence, and, as they were men of education and godly lives, religion in their persons was made reputable in the eyes of the people. One most important result of their coming to the State was that a considerable number of them became so interested in the State and the Churches that they accepted the offers of pastorates, or permanent work, and moved their families here. In this way the Churches gained such men as Rev. Messrs. Lemuel Haynes, a colored minister of marked ability, who settled at West Rutland, Jedediah Bushnell, Holland Weeks, Job. Swift, Silas H. Bingham, John Hough, Josiah Hopkins, David H. Williston, James Parker, Jonathan Hovey, Joel Davis, Simeon Parmelee and Benjamin Wooster.

In the beginning of the present century there were seventy-six Congregational Churches in the State, possibly one or two more that did not live long. These were distributed as follows: Windsor and Windham counties had 13 each, Rutland, 11, Addison 10, Orange 8, Bennington 5, Chittenden and Washington 4 each, Caledonia 3, Essex, Franklin, Grand Isle and Lamoille 1 each. By far the largest part of these Churches were in the southern half of the State. The number of ministers laboring with them in 1800. I have not been able to ascertain, but in 1802 there were 38 settled pastors, 10 supplies and six licentiates—54 ministers for the then existing 84 churches.

The example of Connecticut and Massachusetts, in sending missionaries to help the feeble Churches in Vermont, together with the influence of the men who had come from those States as missionaries, bore fruit at once in leading the Churches in this State to undertake to do their own home missionary work and supply their own destitutions. So in 1803, or very early in 1804, a movement was made by the "Consociations of the Western Districts of Vermont" to commence supplying the religious needs of the towns. A committee was appointed to draw up an appeal asking the Churches for

contributions "to defray the expenses of some missions in our new settlements." That committee consisted of Rev. Benjamin Wooster of Fairfield, Rev. Lemuel Haynes, the colored minister of West Rutland, and Rev. Jedediah Bushnell of Cornwall, all of whom came to the State as home missionaries from Connecticut. They issued a circular letter to the Churches, dated April 4th, 1804, calling on them for contributions. The response was so prompt that in about two and a half months they had a missionary in the field, and during a part of that year employed five. The contributions received the first year amounted to \$327.91. This committee continued for three and a half years to receive contributions and employ missionaries. The beginning of home missionary work in the State by the Churches of the State, dates from the appointment of this committee in 1804, by the "Consociations of the Western Districts of Vermont," and has been prosecuted without intermission from that time to the present. So this year is really the 89th instead of the 75th anniversary, of organized missionary work in the State, by the Churches of the State.

This movement obviated the necessity of any more missionaries coming from Massachusetts or Connecticut. The missionaries employed did not tarry long with any one Church, but went from town to town where their services were most needed. To show the kind of work done, we give the following extract from a report by Rev. James Davis of sixteen week's labor. He says: "I preached 127 sermons, formed two Churches, baptised nine adults and 61 children, and administered the Lord's supper seven times." Most if not all the missionaries so employed had served the Home Missionary Society of Connecticut in the same capacity. In their tours they visited all the towns in the State and labored wherever there was an open door. Among the towns named, where they rendered some missionary service, are Vergennes, New Haven, Hinesburgh, Richmond, Williston, Colchester, Milton, Essex, Underhill, Cambridge, Swanton, Waterbury, Enosburgh, Johnson, Hardwick Greensboro, Cabot, Montpelier.

As this committee of the consociations was doing a work that covered the whole State, and one to which all the Churches were invited to contribute, it was proposed, at the end of about three and a half years, by the "General Convention of Congregational and Presbyterian Ministers of Vermont," at a meeting held at Middlebury, Sept. 1, 1807, to relieve the Consociation Committee from this work and itself assume it. Accordingly the Convention adopted the following resolution: "Resolved, that the Convention form them-

selves into a society to be known by the name and style of the Vermont Missionary Society." The first board of trustees was Rev. Asa Burton, D. D., Rev. Messrs. Martin Tuller, Gersham C. Lyman, Lemuel Haynes, Jedediah Bushnell, Thomas A. Merrill, Hon. Beriah Loomis, Hon. Elisha Allis, Samuel Miller, Esq., Col. Seth Storrs, Dea. Elisha Coolidge and Dea. Timothy Boardman, a strong and efficient body of men. Pastor Thomas A. Merrill was chosen secretary of the society and was its chief executive officer. While pastor of the Church in Middlebury for a quarter of a century, he was, more than any other man, the inspiring spirit and efficient director of the missionary work in the State.

Desiring to promote the general intellectual and religious growth of the Churches the Convention authorized the missionary trustees to superintend the publication of a missionary and religious periodical for circulation among the people, the profits of which should go into the treasury of the Missionary Society. The plan was carried out. The *Advisor*, a monthly magazine, was started in 1809 at Middlebury and was continued for seven years. Many of these were bound in yearly volumes, distributed among the Churches, and even sent to the West and as far South as Louisiana on account of the excellent religious reading and intelligence they contained. In addition to the *Advisor* the trustees published several religious tracts, the Westminster Shorter Catechism, primers, and Watt's Divine Songs, for the use of missionaries and Churches in the State.

The General Convention continued to act as a missionary society for 11 years. Its receipts averaged between six and seven hundred dollars a year, with always a surplus in its treasury. It had no paid officers. All except its missionaries rendered gratuitous services; these were paid from five to seven dollars a week while in active service. From six to 15 men were thus employed for a part of each year. Much gratuitous missionary work was done by settled pastors. There was, at least, occasional preaching each year in the feeblest Churches and in most of the towns where there were no Churches. Missionaries were not only sent through Vermont but over the lake into northern New York. This was done as early as 1809 and was but following the example set by Massachusetts and Connecticut. In the report of 1813 the trustees say: "As the northern section of New York was settled in part from Vermont and is exceedingly destitute of regular ministers, your trustees have always considered it entitled to consideration, and have occasionally extended its inhabitants pecuniary aid." Among the towns in New

York where missionaries were sent were Chateaugay, Stockholm, Madrid, Massena, Constable, Canton, Hopkinton, Potsdam, Parishville and Norwich. One of the first grants made directly to any Church was made to Lewis, N. Y.

When the Vermont Missionary Society had been in operation about nine years, interest in its work begun to wane. Contributions fell off so that they amounted to less than \$400 a year, whereas during the first seven years they had averaged over \$700 a year. A general feeling of discouragement seemed to have come over the friends of missions. The itinerant form of work, which was the only one attempted, failed to secure steady growth and give the Churches a permanent ministry. The trustees seem to have felt this, and in 1812 voted "to afford pecuniary assistance to those societies (meaning Churches) that were unable to support the stated administration of the Gospel," but the Churches were slow to accept the offer and from that time for ten years the itinerant form of work prevailed and grants to aid pastors were the exception. In 1817, when the contributions were at the lowest, the trustees engaged Mr. Levi Parsons, son of Rev. Justin Parsons, pastor of the Church in Pittsfield, Vt., "to discharge the duties of a missionary for six months and make the increase of funds a considerable object." Mr. Parsons was a graduate of Middlebury college and was just completing his studies in theology at Andover seminary. He was under appointment by the American Board to go on a foreign mission to Turkey. He was a young man of fervent piety, great earnestness and zeal, burning with a desire to save souls and advance the kingdom of Christ. He commenced his labors Nov. 1, 1817. Going north from Montpelier he spent eight weeks in Calais, Cabot, Marshfield and Plainfield. Two weeks more were devoted to Hardwick, Greensboro and Craftsbury. He then went north to Westfield and Troy, where he labored with great success, organizing Churches in both those towns.

While engaged in this first six month's service, he became impressed with the conviction that a great impulse might be given to the missionary work in the State by organizing local missionary societies in the several towns among the young, calling them Juvenile Missionary Societies, these to become auxiliary to a State Juvenile Society. He proposed his plan to the trustees, who approved it. He was immediately employed to labor another six months to carry his plans into execution by organizing in the several Churches, Juvenile Societies, delegates from which should constitute the State Society.

In a letter to the trustees he reports success as follows: "As an agent for the formation of Juvenile Societies I have devoted 15 weeks, visited 22 towns, assisted in the organization of 32 societies, and obtained by subscription a sum not far from \$3,000. * *

* * Should this matter be pressed agreeably to the design of the constitution and every destitute town contribute a part in the support of missionaries, an annual subscription might be raised of more than \$10,000."

When the Vermont Missionary Society met in the fall of that year at Peacham, Sept. 10, 1818, it was arranged that that organization should close up and quietly give way to a new society immediately to be organized. Accordingly six day's after, on the 16th of September, a meeting was held at Castleton, composed of delegates from the newly formed local juvenile societies. The meeting chose for its chairman Pres. Joshua Bates, of Middlebury College. A constitution was adopted and a new organization formed, called the Vermont Juvenile Missionary Society, to be composed of delegates from the societies formed in the local Churches. In the address issued by the new society to the people of the State it says in regard to its formation: "The important objects which the society intends to promote will, we trust, entitle it to the confidence, the prayers and the friendly aid of every class of the community. It is, however, more especially designed to embrace the middle aged and the young. Upon these two classes the society particularly urges its claims."

When we examine the names of the thirty-two delegates, from the local juvenile societies, that formed the State Juvenile Society, in order to learn who the devout and enterprising youth who launched the new organization were, we are somewhat surprised to find that they were the identical persons who had been prominent for years in carrying forward the Vermont Missionary Society that had just been given a peaceful burial. Among these ardent and enterprising juveniles who were present and formed the new organization were Rev. Simeon Parmelee, Rev. Daniel Haskell, Rev. Calvin Yale, Rev. Joshua Bates, President of Middlebury College, Rev. Thomas A. Merrill and Dea. Jeremiah Bingham. These and others of the old co-laborers constituted the delegates and officers of the new society. So far as appears, from the report of the first meeting and several succeeding ones, there was not present a single young person as a delegate, nor was there one put on the board of officers. The "juveniles" seem to have confined their activities to the local societies and with great modesty sent their pastors and deacons and men of mature life to represent them as delegates in the State society.

This movement of giving up the Vermont Missionary Society and forming a new organization, was due entirely to the zeal and earnest desire of Rev. Levi Parsons to arouse a new interest in home missions. It proved, at least, a temporary success. A new impulse was given to the work. Local societies were formed in nearly all the Churches and contributions increased. In the report of 1818 the names of more than 750 individuals are given who were members or officers of these local organizations. As furnishing a glimpse of the fervent piety and burning zeal of Mr. Parsons, I will give an extract from his journal, taken from his memoirs, relating to his last visit to Troy, Vt., where the Lord had so blessed his labors. It is dated Troy, Vt., Nov. 29, 1818, and is as follows :

“ This day preached my last sermon to my dear little children, whom I am not to see again till the heavens be no more. The dear lambs of the flock were nourished with spiritual food, and seemed to be under the protection of the Shepherd and Bishop of souls. Precious has been the season of the year past. A few months since, and this whole region was a moral wilderness ; now the desert rejoices upon every side. More than one hundred give evidence of adoption into the family of Christ. The sacrament was administered to more than sixty communicants, who we trust will come with Christ in the glory of his Father. Now, O Shepherd of Israel, to thee I commend these dear disciples, I give back the trust which I have received ; I come to thee to keep, protect and comfort thine own children. O may they be sanctified through thy truth, and received to glory.” This man of seraphic zeal sailed November, 1819, as a foreign missionary to Turkey. But his life’s work was brief. After about two years of work, on Sabbath morning, Feb. 18, 1822, at Alexandria, in Egypt, with Rev. Pliny Fisk as his nurse, his joyful spirit entered into rest. In the *Christian Spectator* there appeared soon after a poem from which we take the following lines :

Thy spirit, Parsons, lur’d by Seraph’s song,
Spreads its untiring wing and upward flies—
There was thy dying coach at evening spread,
And thy frail form was there in peace repos’d ;
Gently the slumbers played around thy head
Till death’s all conquering hand thy eyelids clos’d.
Parsons and Martyn, lock’d in death’s embrace,
Have spread the soul’s glad wing and soar’d away.
’Tis God who guides the planets as they roll,
’Tis God who bids the comets far to roam ;
’Twas He who summon’d Parsons’ holy soul
From foreign lands to its eternal home.”

What a rich heritage has both the home and foreign work in the faith, the prayers and godly lives of many such consecrated men, who now watch from the heavenly heights the work as it is carried on by their successors of to-day! What an inspiration to feel that whatever the trials connected with the work in any humble field or obscure corner of the Master's vineyard, we are not alone, but are encompassed by a great cloud of witnesses and fellow laborers in the tience and kingdom of Christ, who, after their day of toil, have entered into the joy of their Lord. Let us be followers of them who through faith and patience have inherited the promises.

The Vermont Juvenile Missionary Society, formed in 1818, composed of delegates from local societies, prosecuted its work for eight years very much in the same way that the Vermont Missionary Society which preceded it had done, till 1826, when by vote it changed its name to the Vermont Domestic Missionary Society, which it bears to-day. At its organization a sermon was preached by Rev. Joshua Bates, President of Middlebury College, from Isaiah LXII: I. For the sixteen following years a sermon constituted a prominent part of its anniversary exercises. The last anniversary sermon was preached by Rev. Samuel Delano, in 1834. Previous to 1823 its meetings were held at a different time and place from those of the General Convention of Ministers. In that year they met together for the first time, at Ludlow. From that date to the present they have annually held their anniversaries conjointly, at the same time and place.

Before following the history of this society further, there was one marked feature that appeared during the first 25 years of the work, commencing with 1804, that should be noticed. It relates to the part which the Christian women took in it. The women in the Churches responded at once to the first appeal made by the missionary committee of the Consociations of the western districts of Vermont. They were among the first to send in funds to sustain missionaries. Some women of the Church in Cornwall, perhaps inspired by the missionary zeal of their pastor, Rev. Jedediah Bushnell, formed in 1804, a missionary organization called a "Female Society," to raise funds for home missionary work in the State, which, from that time onward made yearly contributions for that object. It was probably the first missionary society of any kind organized in the State. The women of Middlebury soon started a like organization, which, if we mistake not, has never failed for a single year, for more than eighty years, to make its annual offering for this cause. Very soon after,

we find moneys credited to women's societies in Jericho, Danville, Thetford, Castleton and many other towns. These organizations were at first designated in the reports as "Female Societies." A little later as "Female Charitable" or "Benevolent Societies," "Young Ladies' Societies," and in many cases as "Female Cent Societies." They were within a few years found in every county and in most of the Churches in the State, and their contributions were most creditable. It is very doubtful whether the present organizations of auxiliaries to the Women's Board and to the Home Missionary Union express more zeal and self denial or reach as large a proportion of the women in our Churches as did these societies organized by our grandmothers and mothers 75 or 80 years ago. The organization of local societies was greatly stimulated by Mr. Parsons' efforts and was pushed for several years. While some of these societies were composed of both sexes, yet we find a considerable number designated "Female Juvenile Societies," "Young Ladies' Juvenile Societies," and some "Young Men's Juvenile Societies." It is evident that they were thoroughly organized, for during several years the names of the officers of these societies, so far as reported, were published in the missionary reports. In 1819 not less than 97 local juvenile missionary societies were mentioned and the names of 750 persons given who were members of them. In 1826, 142 auxiliaries were reported, 72 of which were women's societies. It is safe to say that from 1818 onward, for some years, the local organizations for missionary work, a large number of which were composed of women, were more general and complete than any thing that exists in the State to-day.

This tribute to the missionary zeal and the efficient organizing ability existing in the Churches three-fourths of a century ago, which was markedly manifest in the Christian women, we record with great pleasure. If in any thing we have surpassed the zeal and missionary activities and methods of our forefathers and foremothers it must be looked for along other lines than those of thorough and general organization.

The year 1826, when the name of the society was changed from Vermont Juvenile to Vermont Domestic Missionary Society, was a memorable year in the home missionary work in the country.

The Connecticut, Massachusetts and United Domestic Missionary Society, of New York, which was formed four years before, were all trying to do some missionary work beyond their own borders in the newly opening west. But it was unsystematic and very unsatisfac-

tory. There was growing up a feeling that there should be a national society to do the missionary work in all the territory west of New England. From various parts of New England a pressure was brought to bear upon the United Domestic Missionary Society of New York to become a national organization. This it consented to do, and changed its name to the American Home Missionary Society. It was provided that the State societies existing in New England should join hands in this movement by becoming auxiliary to the new national organization. They were to do the needed home missionary work in their own borders and turn over all their surplus funds to the American Society for the western work. Vermont consented to this arrangement, as did the other New England States, and the next year, in 1827, at a meeting held at Montpelier, voted to become auxiliary to the New York society.

This movement brought about a marked change in the missionary work in the State. Up to this time it had been almost entirely itinerant in form. The missionaries had gone from town to town laboring only for brief periods in one place. None of them became pastors. The missionary churches had services occasionally, but not regularly through the year and were not permanently strengthened. The directors had for some years felt that the itinerant system was defective, and had in several instances offered appropriations of one or two dollars a week or \$100 a year to churches if they would secure for themselves approved pastors and retain them. This was done as early as 1815. But for the ten years following only a few Churches availed themselves of this offer. The work was almost wholly itinerant till 1826.

But when the American Home Missionary Society was formed it discarded the itinerant plan and announced its purpose to aid Churches in the support of pastors. This brought the matter directly to the attention of the Vermont society and strengthened their previous half formed convictions to adopt the same plan. In their report for 1826 they say: "We are fully convinced that a stated ministry is productive of more lasting benefits than the system of itinerant labor." Experience has taught the same lessons to kindred institutions. Your directors accord with the following sentiments communicated in the last report of the United Domestic Missionary Society of New York, now the American Home Missionary Society, as follows: "It has been required of the missionaries of this society to confine their labors principally to a specified field, embracing one, or at most, not more than two or three Churches. Experience has convinced the

committee, and we rejoice to perceive in the recent usage of other Domestic Missionary Societies, that the Christian public are beginning to be convinced that the system of charitable aid which furnishes weak congregations with the means of supporting a settled ministry is far more effective in its permanent results than that which embraces a wider field and plants but does not water. The latter too often disappoints and discourages those whom it excites and interests; the former pours upon its beneficiaries a permanent stream of saving benefits which it has already taught them to value."

From this time onward the great aim of the society was to persuade Churches to do the utmost they could for themselves to maintain a permanent ministry. Each year thereafter a list of Churches is given that were assisted in supporting their pastor. The itinerant work fell into disuse. From 1839 to 1849 we find no evidence that any itinerant laborer was employed. The society devoted all its efforts to give strength and stability to the Churches by helping them to a permanent ministry. In 1839 there were reported 93 Churches unable to support preaching without aid. Several of these of course were so weak that they could not sustain a pastor with missionary aid and had no preaching. There were other communities where there was no Church and the people were left without religious services of any kind, seed plots of error and ungoldliness. There begun to spring up the feeling that in aiding Churches to sustain the pastorate the whole missionary work needed in the State was not being done. A disposition was manifest to take up again the itinerant form of labor. In 1850 and 1851, Rev. Simeon Parmelee was commissioned for a few months each year to labor as an itinerant in Essex county. For the four following years a little work of this kind was done. But in 1856 the need and importance of it was brought forcibly to the attention of the society by a letter from a layman who had been carefully studying the needs of the very feeblest Churches that were being overlooked, and of other destitute communities unvisited by the heralds of the cross. He proposed that young men—theological students—during their vacations, be employed for a moderate remuneration to labor in the feeblest Churches and destitute communities, visiting from house to house, holding meetings and starting Sunday-schools where needed. To ensure definite action he proposed that \$3,000 be raised each year to carry out this plan and promised to give \$500 of it annually. This proposition of Mr. Thaddus Fairbanks of St. Johnsbury bore immediate fruit. His brother, Hon. Erastus Fairbanks, pledged an annual

offering of \$500 and several other gentlemen pledged smaller sums. The itinerant work was again started with more vigor and system than ever before, under the special direction of Rev. Henry Fairbanks, who had just graduated from the theological seminary, and Rev. W. W. Thayer. For some years after this a large number of theological students and others were employed each year in ministering to the feeblest Churches, and in pioneer work where there were no Churches. This was done with no abatement of the regular work of the society in aiding Churches in support of pastors. The change from the itinerant work to the aiding of Churches was very beneficial. The entire abandonment of it was a mistake. The taking of it up again and making it a permanent part of the work of the society, along with the aiding of Churches in sustaining settled pastors, was a wise movement. It has been blessed of God to the good of many communities and to the saving of many souls. The missionary work during the last 35 years has been prosecuted along these two lines. Churches have been assisted in supporting pastors, a light armed force of itinerants have yearly been deployed to do pioneer work and to add some strength to the feeblest Churches that seemed ready to die.

Since the year 1830, when a record was first kept of the Churches aided in supporting pastors, there has been little change in the number of the Churches yearly aided. The average number of churches aided, (omiting fractions) in the decade from 1830 to 1840 was 43; in the decade from 1840 to 1850, 43; from 1850 to 1860, 50; from 1860 to 1870, 38 Churches and 24 itinerant fields; from 1870 to 1880, 41 Churches and 16 itinerant fields; from 1880 to 1890, 47 Churches and 8 itinerant fields. The average number of Churches aided each year for the last fifty years is 46. The whole number of Churches aided from the beginning is about 169. Of this number at least 30 have become extinct. Sixty-one of the existing Churches never have been on the roll of aided Churches, though some of them were visited by itinerants in their early history. Of the 198 existing Churches, 131 either have a pastor or manage by yoking to sustain public worship without missionary aid. That leaves over 60 Churches that need to be looked after by the missionary society. More than 40 Churches, that for years were dependent on the missionary society have become self-sustaining. Among these are the Churches in Barton, Bellows Falls, Cambridge, Lyndon, Morrisville, Newport, Northfield, Quechee, Richmond and West Randolph.

The contributions of the Churches for home missions show an increase from decade to decade. After a careful examination of the reports, though some of them are not clear, the following figures are, I think, substantially reliable. They show the amount of contributions and legacies received from the State into the treasuries of both our State and National Society. The income from permanent funds and from all sources, except contributions and legacies, is not included in these footings.

The gifts to the Vermont Missionary Society, which was organized in 1807 and continued for eleven years, amounted to \$6,664. Then beginning with 1818, (when the Vermont Juvenile Society was formed, which by change of name become the Domestic Missionary Society); In the first decade the total gifts were \$15,323; in the second decade they were \$32,989; in the third decade \$39,189; in the fourth decade \$74,053; in the fifth decade \$110,918; in the sixth decade \$122,367; in the seventh decade, which closed with 1888, they were 142,139. For the seven complete decades, therefor, the aggregate gifts and legacies from the Churches for the State and national work were \$536,981. The most of this has come from contributions. In 1835 a legacy of \$5,797 was received from the estate of Mr. Joseph Burr, of Manchester, which was large for that day. The \$10,000 left by Hon. Frederick Billings, and about \$17,000 lately received from the estate of Mr. Lyman Clark, are the largest legacies ever received by our State society. The liberal donations given by the brother's Fairbanks, of the past generation, which were continued through so many years, amounted in the aggregate to a large sum, and were phenomenal in our history.

The greatest obstacle we have had to contend with in sustaining our Churches, and in bringing the feeble ones to self-support, has been the great drain that has been made on them by emmigration during all these years. If all the efficient laymen they have given to other States, if all the able and consecrated ministers they have raised and contributed to build up the kingdom of Christ elsewhere, had remained with them and labored for their enlargement their condition would have been vastly different from what it now is. The mission that God has given us has been to become and continue weak that others might be strong. By our diminishing, enlargement has come to Zion elsewhere. While this is confessedly a noble mission its effects have sometimes been deeply depressing and have demanded a degree of cheerful courage, self-denial and faith that have been in excess of the grace given us. But, by patient continuance in do-

ing well our work, we look with confidence to coming years when emmigration will have virtually ceased, the return wave of population will fill our towns and our now feeble Churches will be largely increased. The one shadow that falls darkly upon this hope is that the immigration that shall replenish our towns may be from the province on our north, and that we shall be overrun by a Catholic population of French Canadians, whose numbers so rapidly settling in New England, point to a danger signal. As a matter of safety and self-protection for the future, it becomes us to put forth strenuous efforts to evangelize these people in our towns while yet they are largely in the minority.

It is noticeable that there has been no uniform system of membership in our State missionary organizations. In the case of the Vermont Missionary Society, its membership was identical with that of the General Convention of Congregational and Presbyterian Ministers, during its entire existence from 1807 to 1818. Its anniversary was a part of the annual meeting of that body. As that was composed entirely of ministers, so logically was the missionary society. But, as a matter of fact, it chose leading laymen to act on its board of directors and to fill other offices. It was a feature of the times for the ministers to be forward in all religious work and, through organizations of their own, to do for the Churches most of the public business that belonged to the Churches to do. When the Juvenile Missionary Society was organized, a new departure was taken. That body was at first wholly composed of delegates from local juvenile societies connected with individual Churches. It was entirely distinct in membership from the General Convention and held its meetings at a different time and place from that body. In 1823, when for the first time the two organizations held their anniversaries together, the constitution was changed providing that besides delegates, from local juvenile societies, membership should be given to the members of the General Convention, when the two bodies met at the same place, and also that persons by the payment into the treasury of \$20 at one time, should be made members for life. After the lapse of several years the local juvenile societies, that were organized by Mr. Parsons, gradually died out and, by their death, the delegate system passed away. After 1836 no mention is made of any delegates from them. The society ceased to be a delegate body. It was composed only of life members and the members of the General Convention. In 1847 membership was further extended by granting the privilege of voting to all persons who contributed annually to the funds of the society.

In 1873, another change was made in the constitution by which the members of the General Convention were no longer granted membership in the missionary society. Membership was given only to persons who contribute two dollars a year to the treasury, to life members who had paid at one time \$20 to the funds of the society, and to pastors whose Churches sent in an annual contribution. This is the present arrangement. It makes the contribution of money the only basis of membership. The individual who contributes two dollars is a member for that year. The one who gives \$20 at one time is a member for life. The pastor, of the church which makes a contribution to the society, has the right of membership for every year such contribution is paid over.

It is a question whether this is the best basis of membership. If at any meeting it should be found necessary to ascertain who, of those present, were legally members it might be no easy matter to determine the fact with any certainty. Would it not be better to return to the plan adopted in 1807, when the Vermont Missionary Society was organized, and have the society composed solely of the members of the General Convention? Since, by the late change, the Convention is now composed of a pastoral and lay delegate from each church, it would seem to be as definite and as ideal a body to carry forward the home missionary work as we are likely to secure.

The relations of the Domestic Missionary Society to the American Home Missionary Society have always been pleasant and cordial. That society never has been called upon to give a dollar to help the work in this State, while we have given increasingly large contributions for the national work. The impoverishment of our Churches by emmigration and the amount of work laid upon us to hold our own in our own borders, has made our money offerings less than they otherwise would have been. But what we have failed to give in money has been more than made up by the many thousands of our sons and daughters who have gone from us to build up and be built into Churches in the West and in the cities.

One cannot look back over the reports of our missionary society during all its history without being impressed with its freedom from bondage to any iron bound method. It has shown great elasticity in adapting itself to changed conditions and the needs of the churches so far as these have been discerned. It first did only itinerant work. When that was found insufficient, it dropped it for a time and devoted itself to establishing pastorates, but again resumed itinerant work as there was evident need of it. Where the

wants of the Churches seemed to call for tracts, catechisms and a monthly journal, it took upon itself to supply this need, as it is now doing in publishing the *Vermont Missionary*. It was the first of all the State societies to adopt the grand list of the aided Churches as a basis for making grants to them. Twice it has entered into partnership with the American Sunday-School Union in supporting colporteurs, to establish and supply with literature Sunday-schools in needy towns. It has now a somewhat similar arrangement with the Congregational Sunday-School and Publishing Society. It employed for two or three years an agent of its own, Rev. Stillman Morgan, who was called the "Children's Minister," to labor in the interest of the Sunday-Schools. At three different times it has supported for one or two years a French speaking missionary to labor among the French Canadians in the State. It has at four different times helped support county missionaries where there was a call for such an agency. It has given its commission to State evangelists and placed them at the disposal of any of the feebler Churches where their services might be needed. And in advance of all other sister societies, under the direction of its present efficient and judicious secretary, it is employing women evangelists to work in new lines, feeling after some method—the best method and the best agency—to commend the Gospel to the families and individuals remote from Church centers, whose homes the Church has been resigned in the past to leave with little or no effort to introduce to them the presence of the Son of Man.

With the passing years the volume of missionary work in the State does not decrease, and there is little prospect that it will, at least for some years to come. It is coming to be recognized as a necessity of the times, to do the work of evangelizing communities more in detail, more thoroughly, by actual human contact than has been done; to reach with the Word by the living voice the people in the out districts. The missionary society is wisely, we think, taking the lead in this work, by the employment of Christian women qualified for this service, in connection with feeble Churches and waste places, and thereby demonstrating to the stronger Churches the practicability of this kind of work and of the need of more individual, hand to hand and heart to heart work in reaching hitherto neglected districts and individuals.

Our Domestic Missionary Society is as much needed now as it was in the day that its foundations were first laid, in the faith and prayers of our fathers. The Kingdom of Christ needs it in the State.

The feeble Churches and waste places need its endeavors in their behalf. The strong Churches need it as their agent and channel by which they may communicate the word and grace of God to all the people. Its seventy five years of service has not whitened its locks or palsied its arm, or made its step feeble and tottering. Its is a perennial youth. It walks among the golden candlesticks to-day in the spirit of its Master, as his herald, voicing his offers of mercy to all who will listen to his call. May those here to-day who shall gather to celebrate its centennial twenty-five years hence, be able then to testify of its continued usefulness and witness a large growth of the Kingdom of Christ in the State.

The following is a list of the executive officers of the society from its beginning :

PRESIDENTS.

Hon. Richard Skinner,	-	-	-	-	-	1818—
Titus Hutchinson, Esq.,	-	-	-	-	-	1819—1828
Hon. Samuel Swift,	-	-	-	-	-	1829—1833
William Page, Esq.,	-	-	-	-	-	1834—1846
Hon. W. C. Kiteridge,	-	-	-	-	-	1847—1848
Hon. Erastus Fairbanks,	-	-	-	-	-	1849—1864
James W. Hickok,	-	-	-	-	-	1865—1873
Charles F. Thompson,	-	-	-	-	-	1874—
J. F. Haven,	-	-	-	-	-	1875—
Hon. John W. Stewart,	-	-	-	-	-	1876—
Hon. Franklin Fairbanks,	-	-	-	-	-	1877—1883
Rev. Henry Fairbanks, Ph. D.,	-	-	-	-	-	1884—

CORRESPONDING SECRETARIES

Of the Vermont Missionary Society.

Rev. Thomas A. Merrill,	-	-	-	-	-	1807—1818
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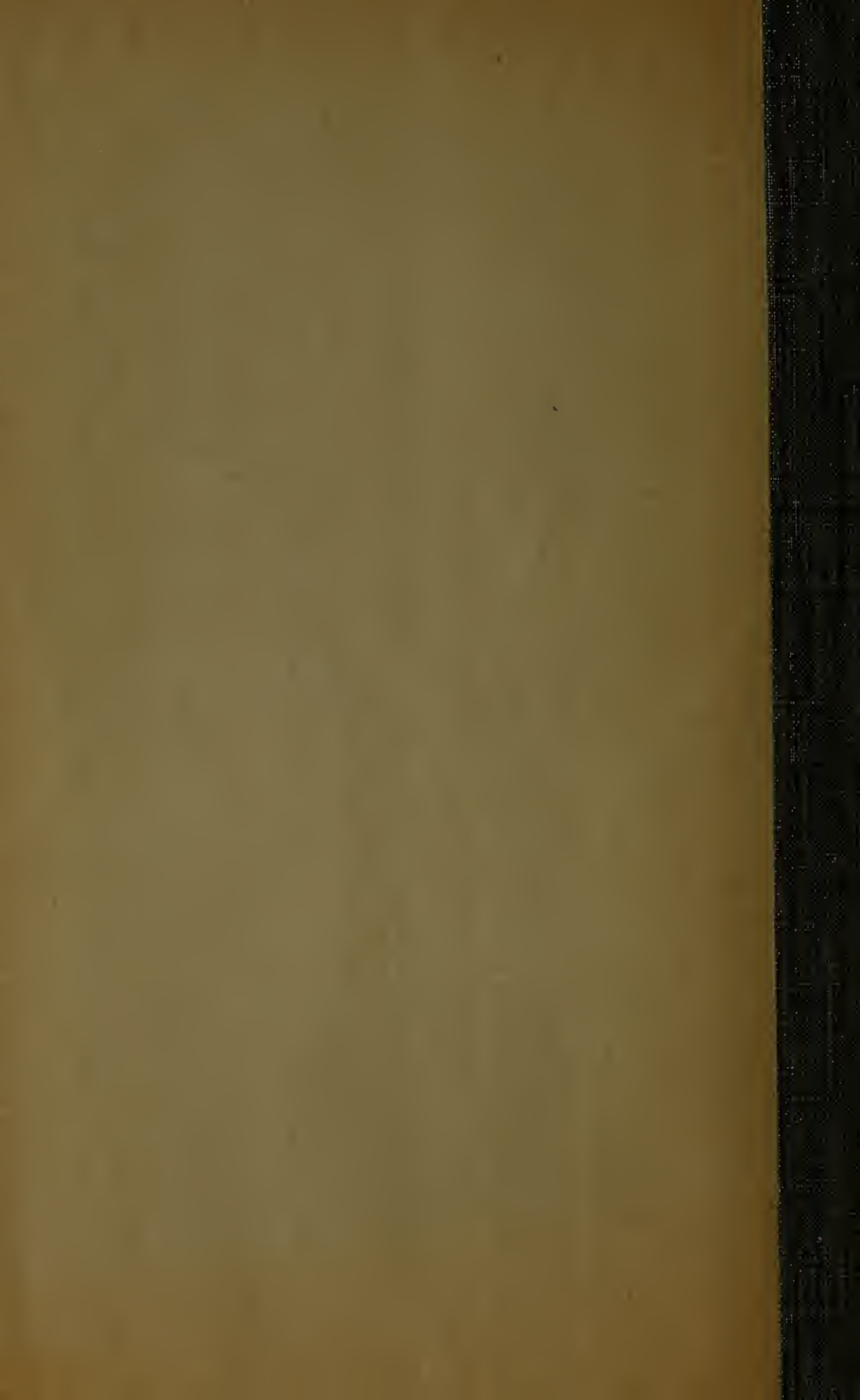
Of the Vermont Juvenile and Domestic Missionary Society.

Rev. Daniel Haskell,	-	-	-	-	-	1818—1821
Rev. Calvin Yale,	-	-	-	-	-	1822—1827
Rev. Ruben Smith,	-	-	-	-	-	1829—
Rev. Charles Walker,	-	-	-	-	-	1830—1832
Rev. Asa Ingraham,	-	-	-	-	-	1833—1838
Rev. Samuel Delano,	-	-	-	-	-	1839—1841
Rev. Isaac R. Worcester,	-	-	-	-	-	1842—1846
Rev. Cyrus B. Drake,	-	-	-	-	-	1847—

Rev. John F. Stone,	-	-	-	-	-	-	1848—1862
Rev. Charles S. Smith,	-	-	-	-	-	-	1862—1887
Rev. Charles H. Merrill,	-	-	-	-	-	-	1888—

TREASURERS.

Dr. William H. Hooker,	-	-	-	-	-	-	1818—1820
Job Lyman, Esq.,	-	-	-	-	-	-	1827—1829
Samuel Kieck, Esq.,	-	-	-	-	-	-	1827—1829
Hon. James D. Butler,	-	-	-	-	-	-	1830—2831
Ira Button,	-	-	-	-	-	-	1832—1838
Constance W. Storrs,	-	-	-	-	-	-	1839—1871
John C. Emery,	-	-	-	-	-	-	1871—1888
T. M. Howard,	-	-	-	-	-	-	1889—



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